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(71) Applicant:
SUMITOMO CHEMICAL COMPANY LIMITED
Osaka-shi, Osaka 541 (JP)

(72) Inventors:
• **Mori, Satoshi**
Narashino-shi, Chiba (JP)

• **Nakanishi, Hiromi**
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo (JP)
• **Takahashi, Michiko**
Utsunomiya-shi, Tochigi (JP)

(74) Representative:
KUHNEN, WACKER & PARTNER
Alois-Steinecker-Strasse 22
85354 Freising (DE)

Remarks:

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(54) **Nicotianamine aminotransferase and gene therefor**

(57) A protein having an amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity, a gene encoding said protein as well as utilization thereof for enhancement of ability of absorbing insoluble iron in soil and for improvement of resistance to iron deficiency are provided.

Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a nicotianamine aminotransferase, a gene therefor and utilization thereof.

Description of Related Art

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Calcareous soil, a saline illuviation soil in dry ground, occupies about 30% of the soil in the world, including China, the Middle and Near East countries, the Central and North Africa, the Central and West America and so on. In this soil, iron in the soil is insolubilized due to a high pH. A plant can not grow in this soil, developing chlorosis by iron deficiency, unless it can absorb iron in soluble form from the root by any means. When agriculture and environmental afforestation are desired, measures against the deficiency of soluble iron in the soil will be an important problem.

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As measures to solve the iron deficiency of plant by agricultural technique, it may be considered (1) to correct pH of the alkaline soil to neutral or slightly acidic one by addition of sulfur, (2) to apply a substance containing a chelated iron or (3) to increase soluble iron in the soil by enhancing soil microorganism activity, for example, by means of application of an organic substance, thereby increasing siderophore (an iron transporter) production by the microorganism.

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These means for providing iron by soil treatment, however, are not always satisfactory because there are problems, for example, that a large amount of application material is required, that the effect is very unstable depending on the method of application including time of application, site of application, concentration, kind of spreader or the like and weather conditions. Therefore, development of novel techniques has been demanded.

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Under these circumstances, the present inventors have conducted extensive studies and discovered a novel gene which is suitable for enhancing absorption ability on insoluble iron in soil and improving resistance to iron deficiency and thus have completed the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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Accordingly, the present invention provides:

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(1) A protein comprising an amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity (hereinafter, referred to as the protein of the present invention),

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(2) A gene encoding the protein as defined in the foregoing item 1 (hereinafter, referred to as the gene of the present invention),

(3) The gene in accordance with the foregoing item 2 having a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2,

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(4) The gene in accordance with the foregoing item 3 having a nucleotide sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 3 or 4,

(5) A plasmid comprising the gene in accordance with the foregoing item 2 (hereinafter, referred to as the plasmid of the present invention),

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(6) An expression plasmid comprising (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) the gene in accordance with the foregoing item 2 and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably linked in the above described order (hereinafter, referred to as the expression plasmid of the present invention),

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(7) A process for constructing an expression plasmid, which comprises combining (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) the gene in accordance with the foregoing item 2 and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably linked in the above described order (hereinafter, referred to as the process for construction of the present invention),

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(8) A transformant comprising a host cell harboring the plasmid as defined in foregoing item 5 or 6,

(9) The transformant in accordance with the foregoing item 8, wherein the host is a microorganism.

(10) The transformant in accordance with the foregoing item 8, wherein the host cell is a plant cell,

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(11) A process for enhancing iron absorbing ability of a host cell, which comprises introducing into a host cell an expression plasmid formed by combining (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably linked in the above described order and transforming said host cell,

(12) The process in accordance with the foregoing item 11, wherein the host cell is a plant cell,

(13) The process in accordance with the foregoing item 12, wherein the gene of the nicotianamine aminotrans-

ferase is the gene as defined in the foregoing item 2,

(14) A gene fragment having a partial sequence of the gene in accordance with the foregoing item 2, 3 or 4 (hereinafter, referred to as the gene fragment of the present invention),

(15) The gene fragment in accordance with the foregoing item 14, wherein the number of the base is 15 or more and 50 or less,

(16) The gene fragment in accordance with the foregoing item 14 having the nucleotide sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 5,

(17) A process for detecting a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises detecting from plant gene fragments a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof by applying the hybridization method using the gene fragment in accordance with the foregoing item 14, 15 or 16 (hereinafter, referred to as the process for detection of the present invention),

(18) A process for amplifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises amplifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof by applying PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on a plant gene fragment using the gene fragment as defined in the foregoing item 14, 15 or 16 as a primer (hereinafter, referred to as the process for amplification of the present invention),

(19) A process for obtaining a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises identifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene or a gene fragment thereof by the process as defined in the foregoing item 17 or 18, and isolating and purifying the identified gene or the gene fragment thereof, and

(20) A nicotianamine aminotransferase gene obtained by the process as defined in the foregoing item 19.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention will be described below in more detail.

The protein of the present invention comprises the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity.

Such protein can be prepared from Gramineae plants, for example, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) or the like by a process, for example, a process described below.

Examples of the protein of the present invention include an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having a molecular weight of 47 kDa comprising 429 amino acids beginning from the amino acid of NO: 33 in SEQ ID NO: 1.

The nicotianamine aminotransferase activity hereinafter refers to an ability of transferring an amino group from nicotianamine to 2-oxoglutarate.

The nicotianamine aminotransferase activity can be measured by, for example, a method described in Kanazawa, K et al., Journal of Experimental Botany, 45, 1903 - 1906 (1994) and others. Specifically, substrates nicotianamine, 2-oxoglutaric acid, and pyridoxal phosphate as a coenzyme are added to an enzyme solution and the mixture is reacted at 25°C for 30 minutes. After the reaction, the reaction product is reduced by adding NaBH₃ and deoxymugineic acid is determined by HPLC.

In order to prepare the protein of the present invention from a Gramineae plant such as barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) or the like, for example, whole root of a Gramineae plant such as barley or the like treated for iron deficiency is triturated and the protein of the present invention is partly purified by subjecting the obtained extract to hydrophobic interaction chromatography, adsorption chromatography, anion exchange chromatography, gel filtration, and second adsorption chromatography in this order using the activity as an indicator. The individual protein fraction obtained from the second adsorption chromatography is subjected to two-dimensional electrophoresis and protein spots are detected which rises and tails in proportion to the intensity of nicotianamine aminotransferase activity of each fraction. The detected spots indicate the protein of the present invention. The protein of the present invention can be purified by isolating from the two-dimensional electrophoresis gel.

Mugineic acid analogues such as deoxymugineic acid produced by a reaction catalyzed by the protein of the present invention and a subsequent reduction reaction, mugineic acid and 3'-hydroxymugineic acid produced by a still subsequent hydroxylation reaction, or the like, solubilizes iron by forming a chelate complex with insoluble iron in the soil. Some kind of plants can biosynthesize said mugineic acid analogues, which are secreted from their root to the soil in the rooting zone, thereby solubilizing insoluble iron in the form of a mugineic acid complex and absorbing the iron complex directly through the root. Therefore, it is possible to enhance production of mugineic acid analogues and increase ability of absorbing insoluble iron by appropriately expressing a large amount of the protein of the present invention in said plants.

The gene of the present invention encodes a protein comprising the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID

NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity.

Such gene can be prepared from Gramineae plants, for example, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) or the like by a process, for example, a process described below.

Further, the gene of the present invention includes a gene encoding a protein comprising the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity and encompasses a gene, for example, that hybridizes with the said gene sequence under stringent conditions. The stringent conditions herein refer to conditions used, for example, in the screening of cDNA library described in Example 4.

Specific examples of the nucleotide sequence of the gene include the nucleotide sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 3 (the loci of CDS being 62 - 1444) or SEQ ID NO: 4 (the loci of CDS being 76 - 1731).

It is possible to increase ability of absorbing insoluble iron in the soil in the rooting zone and improve resistance to iron deficiency by introducing the gene of the present invention into a plant which absorbs iron making use of mugineic acid compounds thereby enhancing biosynthesizing ability of mugineic acid compounds in the obtained transformant plant.

In order to prepare the gene of the present invention, for example, the amino acid sequence of peptide fragments obtained by partially hydrolyzing the protein of the present invention and the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the protein of the present invention are determined by a protein sequencer. Two or more primers comprising DNA sequences expected from these amino acid sequences are synthesized. By conducting PCR using as a template a cDNA synthesized from mRNA prepared from the root of a Gramineae plant such as barley treated for iron deficiency by means of a reverse transcriptase, cDNA fragment of the gene of the present invention is amplified. Using the amplified cDNA fragment as a probe, screening of cDNA library described below is performed. A cDNA is synthesized from mRNA prepared from the root of a Gramineae plant such as barley treated for iron deficiency by means of a reverse transcriptase and this is integrated into a phage vector such as lambda ZAPII or the like or a plasmid vector such as pUC or the like to prepare a cDNA library. This library is screened using the above-mentioned probe and a cDNA of the nicotianamine aminotransferase gene is selected. The selected cDNA can be confirmed to be that of the nicotianamine aminotransferase gene (cDNA of the gene of the present invention) by determining the sequence of the selected cDNA.

In order to obtain genome DNA using the cDNA selected in this manner and determine its sequence, for example, plant tissue such as leaf, stem, root or the like is instantly frozen and sufficiently triturated with a mortar and pestle or a Waring blender. The genome DNA is extracted from the obtained triturated product according to the ordinary method as described in Itaru Watanabe (supervisor), Masahiro Sugiura (editor), "Cloning and Sequencing (a manual for experiment of plant biotechnology)", Nosonbunka-sha, Tokyo (1989) or the like. The obtained genome DNA is digested with an appropriate restriction enzyme and the obtained genome DNA fragments are fractionated by a known method such as sucrose density gradient centrifugation or cesium chloride equilibrium centrifugation or the like. Each of the genome DNA fragment fractions is subjected to normal Southern hybridization using the selected cDNA (cDNA of the gene of the present invention) as a probe to decide a genome DNA fragment fraction containing the desired gene.

A genome DNA library is prepared by ligating the genome DNA fragment fraction to a commercially available vector such as plasmid, phage, cosmid or the like. The library is subjected to normal screening by hybridization using the cDNA of the gene of the present invention as a probe to obtain a genome DNA clone containing a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence of the protein of the present invention. The obtained DNA clone can be subcloned to a vector, for example, plasmid or the like suitable for analysis of gene sequence and the sequence is analyzed according to a routine method to determine the sequence of the genome DNA containing a sequence encoding the amino acid sequence of the protein of the present invention.

The transcription initiation site of genome DNA of the gene of the present invention can be determined by the primer extension method described in Bina-Stem, Met et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 76, 731 (1979), Sollner-Webb and Reeder, R. H., Cell, 18, 485 (1979) or the like or the S1 mapping method described in Berk, A. J. and Sharp, P. A., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 75, 1274 (1978). A TATA sequence necessary for the transcription initiation is present in the upstream of the transcription initiation site decided in this manner. A promoter sequence bearing control of gene expression is present usually at 1 kb to about 10 kb upstream of this transcription initiation site. The promoter region of the gene of the present invention can be finally determined, for example, by connecting gene fragments having promoter regions of various length with a reporter gene such as GUS or the like, preparing transgenic plants into which the connected product are introduced, and studying presence or absence of expression of the reporter gene in various tissues of the prepared plants.

On the other hand, a terminator sequence is present in the genome DNA region corresponding to a poly-A sequence usually present in the downstream of a poly(A) addition signal (consensus sequence being AATAAA) which exists in a terminal 3'-nontranslation region at the downstream of termination codon, and has an effective translation terminating function.

The plasmid of the present invention contains a gene encoding a protein comprising the amino acid sequence rep-

resented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity.

Preferred specific examples of the plasmid include a plasmid prepared by cloning a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 into pSK- (Stratagene). This has a characteristic that its vector portion is small, it has a great number of copies in *Escherichia coli*, and thus it is suitable for preparation of DNA or analysis of DNA structure.

The expression plasmid of the present invention can be constructed by combining (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) the gene encoding a protein comprising the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably linked in the above described order.

The expression "operably linked" used hereinafter means that, when the constructed plasmid is introduced into a host cell to transform it, the gene of the present invention is integrated under the control of a promoter such that the gene has a function of expressing the protein of the present invention in said host cell.

The promoter capable of functioning in a host cell includes, for example, *Escherichia coli* lactose operon promoter, yeast alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) promoter, adenovirus major late (Ad. ML) promoter, SV40 early promoter, baculovirus promoter and the like. When the host cell is a plant cell, the promoter includes, for example, T-DNA derived constitutive promoters such as nopaline synthase gene (NOS) promoter, octopine synthase gene (OCS) promoter and the like, plant virus derived promoters such as cauliflower mosaic virus (CaMV) derived 19S and 35S promoters and the like, and inducible promoters such as phenylalanine ammonia-lyase (PAL) gene promoter, chalcone synthase (CHS) gene promoter, pathogen-related (PR) gene promoter and the like. Further, it includes known plant promoters not limited to them.

The terminator capable of functioning in a host cell includes, for example, yeast HIS terminator sequence, ADH1 terminator, SV40 early splicing region and the like. When the host cell is a plant cell, the terminator includes, for example, T-DNA derived constitutive terminators such as nopaline synthase gene (NOS) terminator and the like, plant virus derived terminators such as garlic virus GV1, GV2 terminators and the like. Further, it includes known plant terminators not limited to them.

A host cell is transformed by introducing such plasmid ((expression) plasmid of the present invention) into said host cell. When the host cell is a plant cell, the (expression) plasmid of the present invention is introduced into a plant cell by any of conventional means such as *Agrobacterium* infection method (JP-B-2-58917 and JP-A-60-70080), electroporation method into protoplast (JP-A-60-251887 and JP-A-5-68575), particle gun method (JP-A-508316 and JP-A-63-258525) and the like, and a transformed plant cell can be obtained by selecting a plant cell into which the gene of the present invention is introduced. The transformed plant body is obtained by regenerating a plant body according to a conventional plant cell culturing process, for example, described in Hirohumi Uchimiya, Manual for Plant Gene Manipulation (Method for Producing Transgenic Plants), Published by Kodansha Scientific (ISBN 4-06-153515-7 C3045), 1990, pages 27 - 55.

By introducing the plasmid of the present invention into host cells which are any kind of microorganism such as *Escherichia coli* or the like and allowing high expression in said host cells, a large amount of the protein of the present invention can easily be isolated from the host cells. A screening system for inhibitors to nicotianamine aminotransferase activity constructed by utilizing the mass produced protein of the present invention. For example, according to the process for measuring nicotianamine aminotransferase activity described above, substrates nicotianamine, 2-oxoglutaric acid and pyridoxal phosphate as the coenzyme as well as a candidate inhibitor compound are added to the prepared enzyme solution, and the mixture is reacted at 25°C for 30 minutes. After the reaction, compounds showing no nicotianamine aminotransferase activity are selected by reducing the reaction product with addition of NaBH₃ and deoxymugineic acid by HPLC.

In plants absorbing iron utilizing mugineic acid compounds, expression of the nicotianamine aminotransferase gene is strongly induced in iron deficiency conditions. Since the common soil (upland soil) is under the oxidative conditions and the ferric iron concentration in soil solution is only a level extremely lower than 10^{-4} - 10^{-8} M that is required by plants, nicotianamine aminotransferase gene and mugineic acid biosynthesis gene are always strongly induced. In other words, plants positively absorb insoluble iron by routinely biosynthesizing mugineic acid compounds and secreting them from the root to the soil in the rooting zone.

The inhibitors to nicotianamine aminotransferase activity selected by the screening system may be compounds useful as selective herbicides against plants that absorb iron by utilizing compounds analogous to mugineic acid.

Further, the present invention provides a process for enhancing iron absorbing ability, which comprises introducing in a host cell an expression plasmid formed by combining (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably in the above described order and transforming said host cell. The promoter capable of functioning in a host cell includes the promoters as described above.

The nicotianamine aminotransferase gene includes, for example, a plant derived nicotianamine aminotransferase gene and preferably the gene of the present invention.

The terminator capable of functioning in a host cell includes the terminators as described above.

The gene fragment of the present invention refers to a gene fragment having a partial sequence of the gene of the present invention represented by SEQ ID NO:3 or 4 and includes a gene fragment having a partial sequence of the gene encoding a protein comprising the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity, specifically, for example, a gene fragment represented by SEQ ID NO: 5.

These gene fragments are useful as probes in hybridization or primers in PCR. Particularly, as primers used in PCR, a gene fragment having 15 or more and 50 or less nucleotides are preferred.

The process for detection of the present invention is a process in which a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof is detected from plant gene fragments by applying the hybridization method using the gene fragment of the present invention as a probe.

Specifically, for example, the process can be performed according to the method described in "Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2nd edition" (1989), Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press or in "Current Protocols in Molecular Biology" (1987), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., ISBN0-471-50338-X. The gene fragments used here may include, for example, cDNA library, genome DNA library or the like of the targeted plant. Said plant gene fragments may be a commercially available library as such derived from a plant, or may also be a library prepared according to the conventional method for preparing a library described in "Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2nd edition" (1989), Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press or in "Current Protocols in Molecular Biology" (1987), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., ISBN0-471-50338-X.

It can also be possible to obtain nicotianamine aminotransferase gene by identifying the nicotianamine aminotransferase gene or a fragment thereof according to the process for detection of the present invention and isolating/purifying the identified gene or gene fragment.

The process for detection of the present invention may be utilized in analysis of plants. Specifically, a plant genome DNA is prepared from different cultivars of a specific plant species according to the process for detection of the present invention the ordinary method described in Itaru Watanabe (supervisor), Masahiro Sugiura (editor), "Cloning and Sequencing (a manual for experiment of plant biotechnology)", Nosonbunka-sha, Tokyo (1989) or the like. It is then incised with at least several kinds of suitable restriction enzymes, electrophoresed, and used for preparing a filter by blotting according to the ordinary method.

Hybridization is conducted on the filter using a probe prepared by the ordinary method and differences in phenotype character accompanied by mugineic acid biosynthesis between cultivars based on the difference in length of DNA fragments. Further, a plant is decided to be a recombinant gene plant if the plant has a greater number of detected hybridization bands than a non-recombinant gene plant when the specific plant is compared with the non-recombinant plant. This method is preferably carried out according to the RFLP (Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism) method described in Ko Shimamoto and Takuji Sasaki (supervisors), "Protocols for PCR Experiment on Plants", Shujunsha, Tokyo (1995), ISBN4-87962-144-7, pp 90 - 94.

The process for amplification of the present invention is a process in which a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof is amplified by applying PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on a plant gene fragments using the gene fragment of the present invention as a primer. Specifically, for example, the process can be performed according to the method described in Ko Shimamoto and Takuji Sasaki (supervisors), "Protocols for PCR Experiment on Plants", Shujunsha, Tokyo (1995), ISBN4-87962-144-7 or the like.

It can also be possible to obtain nicotianamine aminotransferase gene by identifying the nicotianamine aminotransferase gene or a fragment thereof according to the process for amplification of the present invention and isolating/purifying the identified gene or gene fragment.

Further, the process for amplification of the present invention may be utilized in analysis of plants. Specifically, for example, a part or the whole of the gene of the present invention is amplified by conducting PCR using a plant genome DNA prepared from a specific plant species as a template and the gene fragment of the present invention as a primer. The obtained PCR product is mixed with a formaldehyde solution and the mixture is denatured by heating at 85°C for 5 minutes, followed by rapid cooling on ice. This sample is electrophoresed on, for example, 6% acrylamide gel containing glycerol at a concentration of 0% or 10%. The electrophoresis is carried out with a commercially available electrophoresis apparatus for SSCP (Single Strand Conformation Polymorphism) keeping the gel temperature at, for example, 5°C, 25°C, 37°C and so on. The migrated gel is subjected to ethidium bromide staining or the like using a commercially available reagent to detect DNA.

Differences in phenotype character accompanied by mugineic acid biosynthesis between cultivars based on mutation in the gene of the present invention is analyzed from the differences in migration of the DNA fragments detected.

This method is preferably carried out according to the method described in Ko Shimamoto and Takuji Sasaki (supervisors), "Protocols for PCR Experiment on Plants", Shujunsha, Tokyo (1995), ISBN4-87962-144-7, pp 141 - 146. EXAM- PLES

The present invention will now be described in more detail on the bases of Examples, which should not be construed as a limitation upon the scope of the present invention.

Example 1 (Method of Isolating the protein of the present invention)

In an extraction buffer solution (0.2 M Tris-HCl, 10 mM EDTA, 0.1 mM p-APMSF, 10 mM DTT, 5% glycerol, 5% polyvinyl pyrrolidone, pH 8.) was triturated 150 g of root of barley treated for iron deficiency. The trituration product was centrifuged at 8,000 x g for 30 minutes and the supernatant was separated. Ammonium sulfate was added to the obtained supernatant until 30% saturation was attained. The produced sample was applied over Butyl Toyopearl (manufactured by Toso) equilibrated with 30% saturated ammonium sulfate buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 5 mM EDTA, 10 mM DTT), and eluted with 15% saturated ammonium sulfate buffer after washing with the former buffer. To eluted fractions was added p-APMSF at a final concentration of 0.1 mM and the mixture was dialyzed overnight against 0.1 mM KCl, 50 mM KH₂PO₄/K₂HPO₄ (pH 6.8), 10 mM DTT, followed by application over Hydroxylapatite (100 - 350 mesh, manufactured by Nakarai) equilibrated with said buffer. Then it was washed with the same buffer and eluted with 0.5 M KH₂PO₄/K₂HPO₄ (pH 6.8), 10 mM DTT. The eluted fractions were treated with Molecut (Millipore, differential molecular weight 10,000) in order to exchange buffer with 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 10 mM KCl, 10 mM DTT and applied over DEAE Sephasel (manufactured by Pharmacia) equilibrated with the same buffer. After washing with the same buffer, it was eluted with 10 mM - 500 mM KCl concentration gradient. Non-adsorbed fractions from DEAE Sephasel were treated with Molcut in order to exchange buffer with 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 10 mM KCl, 5 mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT and applied over NA-Sepharose 4B which was EAH-Sepharose 4B (manufactured by Pharmacia) having bound nicotianamine (NA). After washing with the same buffer, it was eluted with 1 mM NA, 10 mM KCl, 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 6.0). The eluted fractions were subjected to two-dimensional electrophoresis, which allowed very concentrated spot as compared with the sample before applying on NA-Sepharose 4B column. The spot indicated the protein of the present invention, which was isolated by separating said spot.

The N-terminal amino acid sequence of the protein of the present invention as separated was analyzed by a protein sequencer (manufactured by Applied Biosystems). The result showed revealed an amino acid sequence shown by the amino acids of Nos 33 to 47 in the seq. ID NO.1. Further, N-terminal amino acid sequences for 3 peptide fragments formed by treating it with 70% formic acid solution containing 1% bromocyan were analyzed in the same manner.

Example 2 (Preparation of a probe for cloning of cDNA of the protein of the present invention)

From 6g of root of barley treated for iron deficiency 255 µg of whole RNA was recovered according to the SDS-phenol method described in Itaru Watanabe (supervisor), Masahiro Sugiura (editor), "Cloning and Sequencing (a manual for experiment of plant biotechnology)", Nosonbunka-sha, Tokyo (1989), pp 34 - 40. From the recovered whole RNA, 75 µg portion was taken and used to prepare poly(A)+RNA using Dynabeads mRNA Purification Kit (manufactured by Dynal). The prepared poly(A)+RNA was reverse transcribed with dT17 adapter primer (5'-GACTCGAGTCGACATC-GATTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT-3') to prepare cDNA. A part of the prepared cDNA was used for amplification of cDNA fragment of the gene of the present invention by two steps PCR. In the first reaction, PCR was conducted with a primer 1 (5'-GCIGTIGARTGGAAYTTYGCIMG-3') synthesized on the basis of N-terminal amino acid sequence of the protein of the present invention and the above described dT17 adapter primer and using the obtained cDNA as a template at 94°C (40 seconds), 40°C (1 minute), and 72°C (2 minutes), repeated by 25 cycles, and at 94°C (40 seconds), 45°C (1 minute), and 72°C (2 minutes), repeated by 25 cycles. Using this PCR reaction solution as a template, the second PCR was conducted with a primer 2 (5'-GCDATRTGICCRAAIACIC-3') synthesized on the basis of N-terminal amino acid sequence of the peptide fragment formed by treating with 70% formic acid solution containing 1% bromocyan as described above and the primer 1 at 94°C (40 seconds), 45°C (1 minute), and 72°C (2 minutes), repeated by 40 cycles. The DNA fragment of about 600 bp amplified by the second PCR was purified by excising from 0.8% agarose electrophoresis gel and used as a probe for screening cDNA library.

Example 3 (Preparation of cDNA library from root of barley treated for iron deficiency)

Using a commercially available cDNA synthesis kit (Super Script (trademark) Plasmid System for cDNA Synthesis and Plasmid Cloning, manufactured by Gibco BRL), cDNA was synthesized from 5 µg of poly(A)+RNA prepared from root of barley treated for iron deficiency described in Example 2. The product was ligated with Sall adapter and incised with NotI to recover cDNA.

A vector for cDNA library (hereinafter, referred to as pYH23) was prepared by adding some modification to yeast

multi-copy plasmid YEplac181 described in R. Daniel Gietz and Akio Sugino, *Gene*, 74 (1988), pp 527-534. Specifically, HindIII and BamHI to EcoRI site in the multi-cloning site of YFplac181 was eliminated. Further, promoter and terminator sequences of alcohol dehydrogenase derived from pTV-100 were subcloned at SphI site, and NotI linker was inserted at BamHI site of this fragment.

- 5 The pYH23 prepared in this manner was digested with NotI and XhoI, after inserting cDNA prepared as above, *Escherichia coli* XL1-Blue strain was transformed to provide cDNA library derived from 300,000 independent colonies.

Example 4 (Screening of cDNA clones of the present invention)

- 10 A probe DNA for cDNA cloning of the protein of the present invention was prepared by radioactively labeling the probe prepared in Example 3 with a commercially obtainable radioactivity label kit (Random Primer DNA Labeling Kit Ver. 2, TaKaRa). *Escherichia coli* having a plasmid DNA of cDNA library derived from root of barley treated for iron deficiency as prepared in Example 3 was inoculated in LB medium, incubated at 37°C for 10 hours, and then transferred to a commercially available Nylon membrane (Hybond (trademark)-N+, Amersham Life Science). The membrane was
15 treated with 10% SDS for 3 minutes, an alkaline denaturation solution (0.5 M NaOH, 1.5 M NaCl) for 5 minutes, a neutralizing solution (0.5 M Tris-HCl (pH 7.0), 1.5 M NaCl) for 3 minutes, 2 x SSPE (20 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.4), 0.3 M NaCl, 5 mM EDTA) twice for 3 minutes, dried, and irradiated with ultraviolet rays for 3 minutes to irreversibly fix DNA on the membrane. Prehybridization was carried out at 65°C for 1 hour using a prehybridization solution (5 x Denhart's solution, 5 x SSPE, 0.1% SDS, 100 µg/ml denatured salmon testis DNA). Then, hybridization as carried out in a solution
20 having the radioactively labeled probe added to a hybridization solution (5 x Denhart's solution, 5 x SSPE, 0.1% SDS) at 65°C for 12 hours. Thereafter, the membrane was washed once with 6 x SSP at 65°C for 10 minutes, twice with 2 x SSP, 0.1% SDS at 42°C for 10 minutes, and exposed to Fuji Medical X-ray Film to detect positive colonies. Second and third screenings were performed in the same manner and cDNA clone of the protein of the present invention was isolated.

- 25 Example 5 (Determination of nucleotide sequence of cDNA encoding the protein of the present invention)

- The cDNA clone of the protein of the present invention isolated in Example 4 was subcloned in a plasmid vector pBluescript SK(-) according to the conventional method described in J. Sambrook, E. F. Fritsch, T. Maniatis, "Molecular Cloning, Second Edition" Cold Spring Harbor Press (1989) to give a plasmid cDNA clone. Nucleotide sequence (SEQ. ID NO. 3 and 4) of the insert in said cDNA clone was determined (1) by 373A DNA Sequencer manufactured by Applied Biosystems using Tag Dye Primer Cycle Sequencing Kit (manufactured by Applied Biosystems), (2) by DSQ-1000L DNA Sequencer (manufactured by Shimadzu) using Thermo Sequence Fluorescent Labeled Primer Cycle Sequencing Kit (manufactured by Amersham Life Science), or (3) by BAS-2000 (manufactured by Fuji Film) using BcaBEST (trade-
35 mark) Dideoxy Sequencing Kit (manufactured by TaKaRa). The total amino acid sequences of the protein (see SEQ ID NO: 1 and 2) were determined from the sequence (see SEQ ID NO: 3 and 4). The protein of the SEQ ID NO: 1 had 461 amino acids and its molecular weight was calculated to be 49564.15, and the protein of the SEQ ID NO: 2 had 551 amino acids and its molecular weight was calculated to be 58148.62. According to the present invention, it could be possible to provide a novel nicotianamine aminotransferase, a gene therefor and so on.

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SEQUENCE LISTING

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

- (i) APPLICANT: Sumitomo Chemical Company, Limited
 (ii) TITLE OF INVENTION: Nicotianamine Aminotransferase and Gene therefor
 (iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 6
 (iv) CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
 (A) ADDRESSEE: Sumitomo Chemical Company, Limited
 (B) STREET: 5-33, Kitahama 4-Chome, Chuo-ku
 (C) CITY: Osaka
 (D) STATE: Osaka-fu
 (E) COUNTRY: Japan
 (F) ZIP: 541-0858
 (G) TELEPHONE: 81-6-220-3405
 (H) TELEFAX: 81-6-220-3390
 (v) COMPUTER READABLE FORM:
 (A) MEDIUM TYPE: 1.4MB
 (B) COMPUTER: IBM
 (C) OPERATING SYSTEM: MS-DOS
 (D) SOFTWARE: Word 6.0
 (vi) CURRENT APPLICATION DATA:
 (A) APPLICATION NUMBER:
 (B) FILING DATE: 19.2.1998
 (C) CLASSIFICATION:
 (vii) PRIOR APPLICATION DATA:
 (A) APPLICATION NUMBER: JP 09-037499
 (B) FILING DATE: 21.02.1997
 (viii) ATTORNEY/AGENT INFORMATION:
 (A) NAME: KWP
 (B) REGISTRATION NUMBER: Association Nr. 5
 (C) REFERENCE/DOCKET NUMBER: SM1009
 (ix) TELECOMMUNICATION INFORMATION:
 (A) TELEPHONE: 08161/930-211
 (B) TELEFAX: 08161/930-100

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 1:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 461 amino acids
 (B) TYPE: amino acid
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear
 (ii) MOLECULAR TYPE: peptide
 (xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 1:

Met Val His Gln Ser Asn Gly His Gly Glu Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala
 1 5 10 15
 Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn
 20 25 30
 Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala Val Glu Trp Asn Phe Ala Arg Gly Lys
 35 40 45
 Asp Gly Ile Leu Ala Thr Thr Gly Ala Lys Asn Ser Ile Arg Ala Ile
 50 55 60
 Arg Tyr Lys Ile Ser Ala Ser Val Glu Glu Ser Gly Pro Arg Pro Val
 65 70 75 80
 Leu Pro Leu Ala His Gly Asp Pro Ser Val Phe Pro Ala Phe Arg Thr
 85 90 95
 Ala Val Glu Ala Glu Asp Ala Val Ala Ala Ala Leu Arg Thr Gly Gln
 100 105 110
 Phe Asn Cys Tyr Ala Ala Gly Val Gly Leu Pro Ala Ala Arg Ser Ala

115 120 125
 Val Ala Glu His Leu Ser Gln Gly Val Pro Tyr Lys Leu Ser Ala Asp
 130 135 140
 5 Asp Val Phe Leu Thr Ala Gly Gly Thr Gln Ala Ile Glu Val Ile Ile
 145 150 155 160
 Pro Val Leu Ala Gln Thr Ala Gly Ala Asn Ile Leu Leu Pro Arg Pro
 165 170 175
 Gly Tyr Pro Asn Tyr Glu Ala Arg Ala Ala Phe Asn Lys Leu Glu Val
 180 185 190
 10 Arg His Phe Asp Leu Ile Pro Asp Lys Gly Trp Glu Ile Asp Ile Asp
 195 200 205
 Ser Leu Glu Ser Ile Ala Asp Lys Asn Thr Thr Ala Met Val Ile Ile
 210 215 220
 Asn Pro Asn Asn Pro Cys Gly Ser Val Tyr Ser Tyr Asp His Leu Ala
 225 230 235 240
 15 Lys Val Ala Glu Val Ala Arg Lys Leu Gly Ile Leu Val Ile Ala Asp
 245 250 255
 Glu Val Tyr Gly Lys Leu Val Leu Gly Ser Ala Pro Phe Ile Pro Met
 260 265 270
 Gly Val Phe Gly His Ile Ala Pro Val Leu Ser Ile Gly Ser Leu Ser
 275 280 285
 20 Lys Ser Trp Ile Val Pro Gly Trp Arg Leu Gly Trp Val Ala Val Tyr
 290 295 300
 Asp Pro Thr Lys Ile Leu Glu Lys Thr Lys Ile Ser Thr Ser Ile Thr
 305 310 315 320
 Asn Tyr Leu Asn Val Ser Thr Asp Pro Ala Thr Phe Val Gln Glu Ala
 325 330 335
 25 Leu Pro Lys Ile Leu Glu Asn Thr Lys Ala Asp Phe Phe Lys Arg Ile
 340 345 350
 Ile Gly Leu Leu Lys Glu Ser Ser Glu Ile Cys Tyr Arg Glu Ile Lys
 355 360 365
 Glu Asn Lys Tyr Ile Thr Cys Pro His Lys Pro Glu Gly Ser Met Phe
 370 375 380
 30 Val Met Val Lys Leu Asn Leu His Leu Leu Glu Glu Ile His Asp Asp
 385 390 395 400
 Ile Asp Phe Cys Cys Lys Leu Ala Lys Glu Glu Ser Val Ile Leu Cys
 405 410 415
 Pro Gly Ser Val Leu Gly Met Glu Asn Trp Val Arg Ile Thr Phe Ala
 420 425 430
 35 Cys Val Pro Ser Ser Leu Gln Asp Gly Leu Glu Arg Val Lys Ser Phe
 435 440 445
 Cys Gln Arg Asn Lys Lys Lys Asn Ser Ile Asn Gly Cys
 450 455 460 461

(3) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 2:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 551 amino acids

(B) TYPE: amino acid

(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULAR TYPE: peptide

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 2:

Met Ala Thr Val Arg Gln Ser Asp Gly Val Ala Ala Asn Gly Leu Ala
 1 5 10 15
 50 Val Ala Ala Ala Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Gly Val Ala Ala
 20 25 30
 Ala Val Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Gly Val Asp Ala Asp Ala Asn

35 40 45
 Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Gly Val Ala Ala Asp Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser
 50 55 60
 5 Asn Gly His Ala Glu Ala Thr Ala Asn Gly His Gly Glu Ala Thr Ala
 65 70 75 80
 Asn Gly Lys Thr Asn Gly His Arg Glu Ser Asn Gly His Ala Glu Ala
 85 90 95
 Ala Asp Ala Asn Gly Glu Ser Asn Glu His Ala Glu Asp Ser Ala Ala
 100 105 110
 10 Asn Gly Glu Ser Asn Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Glu Glu Glu
 115 120 125
 Ala Val Glu Trp Asn Phe Ala Gly Ala Lys Asp Gly Val Leu Ala Ala
 130 135 140
 Thr Gly Ala Asn Met Ser Ile Arg Ala Ile Arg Tyr Lys Ile Ser Ala
 145 150 155 160
 15 Ser Val Gln Glu Lys Gly Pro Arg Pro Val Leu Pro Leu Ala His Gly
 165 170 175
 Asp Pro Ser Val Phe Pro Ala Phe Arg Thr Ala Val Glu Ala Glu Asp
 180 185 190
 Ala Val Ala Ala Val Arg Thr Gly Gln Phe Asn Cys Tyr Pro Ala
 195 200 205
 20 Gly Val Gly Leu Pro Ala Ala Arg Ser Ala Val Ala Glu His Leu Ser
 210 215 220
 Gln Gly Val Pro Tyr Met Leu Ser Ala Asp Asp Val Phe Leu Thr Ala
 225 230 235 240
 Gly Gly Thr Gln Ala Ile Glu Val Ile Ile Pro Val Leu Ala Gln Thr
 245 250 255
 25 Ala Gly Ala Asn Ile Leu Leu Pro Arg Pro Gly Tyr Pro Asn Tyr Glu
 260 265 270
 Ala Arg Ala Ala Phe Asn Arg Leu Glu Val Arg His Phe Asp Leu Ile
 275 280 285
 Pro Asp Lys Gly Trp Glu Ile Asp Ile Asp Ser Leu Glu Ser Ile Ala
 290 295 300
 30 Asp Lys Asn Thr Thr Ala Met Val Ile Ile Asn Pro Asn Asn Pro Cys
 305 310 315 320
 Gly Ser Val Tyr Ser Tyr Asp His Leu Ser Lys Val Ala Glu Val Ala
 325 330 335
 35 Lys Arg Leu Gly Ile Leu Val Ile Ala Asp Glu Val Tyr Gly Lys Leu
 340 345 350
 Val Leu Gly Ser Ala Pro Phe Ile Pro Met Gly Val Phe Gly His Ile
 355 360 365
 Thr Pro Val Leu Ser Ile Gly Ser Leu Ser Lys Ser Trp Ile Val Pro
 370 375 380
 40 Gly Trp Arg Leu Gly Trp Val Ala Val Tyr Asp Pro Arg Lys Ile Leu
 385 390 395 400
 Gln Glu Thr Lys Ile Ser Thr Ser Ile Thr Asn Tyr Leu Asn Val Ser
 405 410 415
 Thr Asp Pro Ala Thr Phe Ile Gln Ala Ala Leu Pro Gln Ile Leu Glu
 420 425 430
 45 Asn Thr Lys Glu Asp Phe Phe Lys Ala Ile Ile Gly Leu Leu Lys Glu
 435 440 445
 Ser Ser Glu Ile Cys Tyr Lys Gln Ile Lys Glu Asn Lys Tyr Ile Thr
 450 455 460
 Cys Pro His Lys Pro Glu Gly Ser Met Phe Val Met Val Lys Leu Asn
 465 470 475 480
 50 Leu His Leu Leu Glu Glu Ile Asp Asp Asp Ile Asp Phe Cys Cys Lys
 485 490 495
 Leu Ala Lys Glu Glu Ser Val Ile Leu Cys Pro Gly Ser Val Leu Gly

500 505 510
 Met Ala Asn Trp Val Arg Ile Thr Phe Ala Cys Val Pro Ser Ser Leu
 515 520 525
 5 Gln Asp Gly Leu Gly Arg Ile Lys Ser Phe Cys Gln Arg Asn Lys Lys
 530 535 540
 Arg Asn Ser Ser Asp Asp Cys
 545 550 551

(4) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 3:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 1660 base pairs

(B) TYPE: nucleic acid

(C) STRANDEDNESS: double

(D) TOPOLOGY:

(ii) MOLECULAR TYPE: cDNA to mRNA

(iii) HYPOTHETICAL:

(iv) ANTI-SENSE:

(v) FEATURE: CDS

(vi) LOCATION: 62 .. 1447

(vii) IDENTIFICATION METHOD: P

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 3:

ATTGACTAGC TAGTTCATTC CCTGCCACAC TGCTAGTACT CCTCCTCGTT TCCTCGTGGC 60
 A ATG GTA CAC CAG AGC AAC GGC CAC GGC GAG GCC GCC GCC GCC GCC 106
 Met Val His Gln Ser Asn Gly His Gly Glu Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala
 1 5 10 15
 25 GCC AAC GGC AAG AGC AAC GGG CAC GCC GCC GCC GCG AAC GGC AAG AGC 154
 Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser
 20 25 30
 AAC GGG CAC GCG GCG GCG GCG GCG GTG GAG TGG AAT TTC GCC CGG GGC 202
 Asn Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala Val Glu Trp Asn Phe Ala Arg Gly
 35 40 45
 AAG GAC GGC ATC CTG GCG ACG ACG GGG GCG AAG AAC AGC ATC CGG GCG 250
 Lys Asp Gly Ile Leu Ala Thr Thr Gly Ala Lys Asn Ser Ile Arg Ala
 50 55 60
 ATA CGG TAC AAG ATC AGC GCG AGC GTG GAG GAG AGC GGG CCG CGG CCC 298
 Ile Arg Tyr Lys Ile Ser Ala Ser Val Glu Glu Ser Gly Pro Arg Pro
 65 70 75
 35 GTG CTG CCG CTG GCC CAC GGT GAC CCG TCC GTG TTC CCG GCC TTC CGC 346
 Val Leu Pro Leu Ala His Gly Asp Pro Ser Val Phe Pro Ala Phe Arg
 80 85 90 95
 40 ACG GCC GTC GAG GCC GAA GAC GCC GTC GCC GCC GCG CTG CGC ACC GGC 394
 Thr Ala Val Glu Ala Glu Asp Ala Val Ala Ala Ala Leu Arg Thr Gly
 100 105 110
 CAG TTC AAC TGC TAC GCC GCC GGC GTC GGC CTC CCC GCC GCA CGA AGC 442
 Gln Phe Asn Cys Tyr Ala Ala Gly Val Gly Leu Pro Ala Ala Arg Ser
 115 120 125
 45 GCC GTA GCA GAG CAC TTG TCA CAG GGC GTG CCC TAC AAG CTA TCG GCC 490
 Ala Val Ala Glu His Leu Ser Gln Gly Val Pro Tyr Lys Leu Ser Ala
 130 135 140
 GAC GAC GTC TTC CTC ACC GCC GGC GGA ACT CAG GCG ATC GAA GTC ATA 538
 Asp Asp Val Phe Leu Thr Ala Gly Gly Thr Gln Ala Ile Glu Val Ile
 145 150 155
 50 ATC CCG GTG CTG GCC CAG ACT GCC GGC GCC AAC ATA CTG CTT CCC CGG 586
 Ile Pro Val Leu Ala Gln Thr Ala Gly Ala Asn Ile Leu Leu Pro Arg
 160 165 170 175
 CCA GGC TAT CCA AAT TAC GAG GCG CGA GCG GCA TTC AAC AAG CTG GAG 634

	Pro	Gly	Tyr	Pro	Asn	Tyr	Glu	Ala	Arg	Ala	Phe	Asn	Lys	Leu	Glu	
					180					185				190		
5	GTC	CGG	CAC	TTC	GAC	CTC	ATC	CCC	GAC	AAG	GGG	TGG	GAG	ATC	GAC	ATC
	Val	Arg	His	Phe	Asp	Leu	Ile	Pro	Asp	Lys	Gly	Trp	Glu	Ile	Asp	Ile
				195				200					205			
	GAC	TCG	CTG	GAA	TCC	ATC	GCC	GAC	AAG	AAC	ACC	ACC	GCG	ATG	GTC	ATC
	Asp	Ser	Leu	Glu	Ser	Ile	Ala	Asp	Lys	Asn	Thr	Thr	Ala	Met	Val	Ile
			210					215					220			
10	ATA	AAC	CCA	AAC	AAT	CCG	TGC	GGC	AGC	GTT	TAC	TCC	TAC	GAC	CAT	CTG
	Ile	Asn	Pro	Asn	Asn	Pro	Cys	Gly	Ser	Val	Tyr	Ser	Tyr	Asp	His	Leu
		225					230					235				
	GCC	AAG	GTC	GCG	GAG	GTG	GCA	AGG	AAG	CTC	GGA	ATA	TTG	GTG	ATC	GCT
	Ala	Lys	Val	Ala	Glu	Val	Ala	Arg	Lys	Leu	Gly	Ile	Leu	Val	Ile	Ala
		240			245						250					255
15	GAC	GAG	GTT	TAC	GGC	AAA	CTG	GTT	CTG	GGC	AGC	GCC	CCG	TTT	ATC	CCG
	Asp	Glu	Val	Tyr	Gly	Lys	Leu	Val	Leu	Gly	Ser	Ala	Pro	Phe	Ile	Pro
					260				265						270	
	ATG	GGC	GTC	TTT	GGG	CAC	ATT	GCC	CCG	GTC	TTG	TCC	ATT	GGA	TCT	CTG
	Met	Gly	Val	Phe	Gly	His	Ile	Ala	Pro	Val	Leu	Ser	Ile	Gly	Ser	Leu
				275				280						285		
20	TCC	AAG	TCG	TGG	ATA	GTG	CCT	GGA	TGG	CGA	CTT	GGA	TGG	GTG	GCG	GTG
	Ser	Lys	Ser	Trp	Ile	Val	Pro	Gly	Trp	Arg	Leu	Gly	Trp	Val	Ala	Val
			290				295						300			
	TAC	GAC	CCC	ACA	AAG	ATT	TTA	GAG	AAA	ACT	AAG	ATC	TCT	ACG	TCT	ATT
	Tyr	Asp	Pro	Thr	Lys	Ile	Leu	Glu	Lys	Thr	Lys	Ile	Ser	Thr	Ser	Ile
		305					310					315				
25	ACG	AAT	TAC	CTT	AAT	GTC	TCA	ACG	GAC	CCA	GCA	ACC	TTC	GTT	CAG	GAA
	Thr	Asn	Tyr	Leu	Asn	Val	Ser	Thr	Asp	Pro	Ala	Thr	Phe	Val	Gln	Glu
		320			325					330					335	
	GCT	CTT	CCT	AAA	ATT	CTT	GAG	AAC	ACA	AAA	GCA	GAT	TTC	TTT	AAG	AGG
	Ala	Leu	Pro	Lys	Ile	Leu	Glu	Asn	Thr	Lys	Ala	Asp	Phe	Phe	Lys	Arg
				340					345						350	
30	ATT	ATT	GGT	CTA	CTA	AAG	GAA	TCA	TCA	GAG	ATA	TGT	TAT	AGG	GAA	ATA
	Ile	Ile	Gly	Leu	Leu	Lys	Glu	Ser	Ser	Glu	Ile	Cys	Tyr	Arg	Glu	Ile
			355					360					365			
	AAG	GAA	AAC	AAA	TAT	ATT	ACG	TGT	CCT	CAC	AAG	CCA	GAA	GGA	TCG	ATG
	Lys	Glu	Asn	Lys	Tyr	Ile	Thr	Cys	Pro	His	Lys	Pro	Glu	Gly	Ser	Met
			370				375					380				
35	TTT	GTA	ATG	GTC	AAA	CTA	AAC	TTA	CAT	CTT	TTG	GAG	GAG	ATC	CAT	GAC
	Phe	Val	Met	Val	Lys	Leu	Asn	Leu	His	Leu						

(5) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 4:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 1910 base pairs

(B) TYPE: nucleic acid

(C) STRANDEDNESS: double

(D) TOPOLOGY:

(ii) MOLECULAR TYPE: cDNA to mRNA

(iii) HYPOTHETICAL:

(iv) ANTI-SENSE:

(v) FEATURE: CDS

(vi) LOCATION: 76 .. 1731

(vii) IDENTIFICATION METHOD: P

(viii) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 4:

15	CGCGCTACTA GTAGTATTCC TGGTGTAGTC TAGTAGTACT CTCCTCCTCC TCCTTCTCCT	60
	CCTACCCGTT TCCTC ATG GCC ACC GTA CGC CAG AGC GAC GGA GTC GCC GCG	111
	Met Ala Thr Val Arg Gln Ser Asp Gly Val Ala Ala	
	1 5 10	
	AAC GGC CTT GCC GTG GCC GCA GCC GCG AAC GGC AAG AGC AAC GGC CAT	159
20	Asn Gly Leu Ala Val Ala Ala Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His	
	15 20 25	
	GGC GTG GCT GCC GCC GTG AAC GGC AAG AGC AAC GGC CAT GGC GTG GAT	207
	Gly Val Ala Ala Ala Val Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Gly Val Asp	
	30 35 40	
	GCC GAC GCG AAC GGC AAG AGC AAC GGC CAT GGC GTG GCT GCC GAC GCG	255
25	Ala Asp Ala Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Gly Val Ala Ala Asp Ala	
	45 50 55 60	
	AAC GGC AAG AGC AAC GGC CAT GCC GAG GCC ACT GCG AAC GGC CAC GGC	303
	Asn Gly Lys Ser Asn Gly His Ala Glu Ala Thr Ala Asn Gly His Gly	
	65 70 75	
	GAG GCC ACT GCG AAC GGC AAG ACC AAC GGC CAC CGC GAG AGC AAC GGC	351
30	Glu Ala Thr Ala Asn Gly Lys Thr Asn Gly His Arg Glu Ser Asn Gly	
	80 85 90	
	CAT GCT GAG GCC GCC GAC GCG AAC GGC GAG AGC AAC GAG CAT GCC GAG	399
	His Ala Glu Ala Ala Asp Ala Asn Gly Glu Ser Asn Glu His Ala Glu	
	95 100 105	
	GAC TCC GCG GCG AAC GGC GAG AGC AAC GGC CAT GCG GCG GCG GCG GCA	447
35	Asp Ser Ala Ala Asn Gly Glu Ser Asn Gly His Ala Ala Ala Ala Ala	
	110 115 120	
	GAG GAG GAG GAG GCG GTG GAG TGG AAT TTC GCG GGT GCC AAG GAC GGC	495
	Glu Glu Glu Glu Ala Val Glu Trp Asn Phe Ala Gly Ala Lys Asp Gly	
	125 130 135 140	
	GTG CTG GCG GCG ACG GGG GCG AAC ATG AGC ATC CGG GCG ATA CGG TAC	543
40	Val Leu Ala Ala Thr Gly Ala Asn Met Ser Ile Arg Ala Ile Arg Tyr	
	145 150 155	
	AAG ATC AGC GCG AGC GTG CAG GAG AAG GGC CCG CGG CCC GTG CTG CCG	591
	Lys Ile Ser Ala Ser Val Gln Glu Lys Gly Pro Arg Pro Val Leu Pro	
	160 165 170	
	CTG GCC CAC GGG GAC CCG TCC GTG TTC CCG GCC TTC CGC ACG GCC GTC	639
45	Leu Ala His Gly Asp Pro Ser Val Phe Pro Ala Phe Arg Thr Ala Val	
	175 180 185	
	GAG GCC GAG GAC GCC GTC GCC GCC GCC GTG CGC ACC GGC CAG TTC AAC	687
	Glu Ala Glu Asp Ala Val Ala Ala Val Arg Thr Gly Gln Phe Asn	
	190 195 200	
	TGC TAC CCC GCC GGC GTC GGC CTC CCC GCC GCA CGA AGC GCC GTG GCA	735
50	Cys Tyr Pro Ala Gly Val Gly Leu Pro Ala Ala Arg Ser Ala Val Ala	
	205 210 215 220	

	GAG CAC CTG TCG CAG GGC GTG CCG TAC ATG CTA TCG GCC GAC GAC GTC	783
	Glu His Leu Ser Gln Gly Val Pro Tyr Met Leu Ser Ala Asp Asp Val	
	225 230 235	
5	TTC CTC ACC GCC GGC GGG ACC CAG GCG ATC GAG GTC ATA ATC CCG GTG	831
	Phe Leu Thr Ala Gly Gly Thr Gln Ala Ile Glu Val Ile Ile Pro Val	
	240 245 250	
	CTG GCC CAG ACC GCC GGC GCC AAC ATT CTG CTC CCC AGG CCA GGC TAC	879
	Leu Ala Gln Thr Ala Gly Ala Asn Ile Leu Leu Pro Arg Pro Gly Tyr	
	255 260 265	
10	CCA AAC TAC GAG GCG CGC GCC GCG TTC AAC AGG CTG GAG GTC CGG CAT	927
	Pro Asn Tyr Glu Ala Arg Ala Ala Phe Asn Arg Leu Glu Val Arg His	
	270 275 280	
	TTC GAC CTC ATC CCC GAC AAG GGG TGG GAG ATC GAC ATC GAC TCG CTG	975
	Phe Asp Leu Ile Pro Asp Lys Gly Trp Glu Ile Asp Ile Asp Ser Leu	
	285 290 295 300	
15	GAA TCC ATC GCC GAC AAG AAC ACC ACC GCC ATG GTC ATC ATA AAC CCC	1023
	Glu Ser Ile Ala Asp Lys Asn Thr Thr Ala Met Val Ile Ile Asn Pro	
	305 310 315	
	AAC AAC CCG TGC GGC AGC GTT TAC TCC TAC GAC CAT CTG TCC AAG GTC	1071
	Asn Asn Pro Cys Gly Ser Val Tyr Ser Tyr Asp His Leu Ser Lys Val	
	320 325 330	
20	GCG GAG GTG GCG AAA AGG CTC GGA ATA TTG GTG ATT GCT GAC GAG GTA	1119
	Ala Glu Val Ala Lys Arg Leu Gly Ile Leu Val Ile Ala Asp Glu Val	
	335 340 345	
	TAC GGC AAG CTG GTT CTG GGC AGC GCC CCG TTC ATC CCA ATG GGA GTG	1167
	Tyr Gly Lys Leu Val Leu Gly Ser Ala Pro Phe Ile Pro Met Gly Val	
	350 355 360	
25	TTT GGG CAC ATC ACC CCT GTG CTG TCC ATA GGG TCT CTG TCC AAG TCA	1215
	Phe Gly His Ile Thr Pro Val Leu Ser Ile Gly Ser Leu Ser Lys Ser	
	365 370 375 380	
	TGG ATA GTG CCT GGA TGG CGG CTT GGA TGG GTA GCG GTG TAC GAC CCC	1263
	Trp Ile Val Pro Gly Trp Arg Leu Gly Trp Val Ala Val Tyr Asp Pro	
	385 390 395	
30	AGA AAG ATC TTA CAG GAA ACT AAG ATC TCT ACA TCA ATT ACG AAT TAC	1311
	Arg Lys Ile Leu Gln Glu Thr Lys Ile Ser Thr Ser Ile Thr Asn Tyr	
	400 405 410	
	CTC AAT GTC TCG ACA GAC CCA GCA ACC TTC ATT CAG GCA GCT CTT CCT	1359
	Leu Asn Val Ser Thr Asp Pro Ala Thr Phe Ile Gln Ala Ala Leu Pro	
	415 420 425	
35	CAG ATT CTT GAG AAC ACA AAG GAA GAT TTC TTT AAG GCG ATT ATT GGT	1407
	Gln Ile Leu Glu Asn Thr Lys Glu Asp Phe Phe Lys Ala Ile Ile Gly	
	430 435 440	
	CTG CTA AAG GAA TCA TCA GAG ATA TGC TAC AAA CAA ATA AAG GAA AAC	1455
	Leu Leu Lys Glu Ser Ser Glu Ile Cys Tyr Lys Gln Ile Lys Glu Asn	
	445 450 455 460	
40	AAA TAC ATT ACA TGT CCT CAC AAG CCA GAA GGA TCA ATG TTT GTC ATG	1503
	Lys Tyr Ile Thr Cys Pro His Lys Pro Glu Gly Ser Met Phe Val Met	
	465 470 475	
	GTG AAA CTG AAC TTA CAT CTT TTG GAG GAA ATA GAC GAT GAC ATT GAT	1551
	Val Lys Leu Asn Leu His Leu Leu Glu Ile Asp Asp Asp Ile Asp	
	480 485 490	
	TTT TGC TGC AAG CTC GCA AAA GAA GAA TCA GTA ATC TTA TGC CCA GGG	1599
	Phe Cys Cys Lys Leu Ala Lys Glu Glu Ser Val Ile Leu Cys Pro Gly	
	495 500 505	
	AGT GTT CTT GGA ATG GCA AAC TGG GTC CGC ATT ACT TTT GCT TGT GTT	1647
	Ser Val Leu Gly Met Ala Asn Trp Val Arg Ile Thr Phe Ala Cys Val	
	510 515 520	
50	CCA TCT TCT CTT CAA GAT GGT CTC GGA AGG ATC AAA TCA TTC TGT CAA	1695

Pro Ser Ser Leu Gln Asp Gly Leu Gly Arg Ile Lys Ser Phe Cys Gln
 535 530 535 540
 AGG AAC AAG AAG AGA AAT TCG AGC GAT GAT TGC TAG TTGTATATCT 1741
 5 Arg Asn Lys Lys Arg Asn Ser Ser Asp Asp Cys
 545 550 551
 GACTGAAGCT GTAAATCATT CCCAGTATCC CCATCTATAT CTTTCAATAA AATGGAACTT 1801
 TTAGTTCTCT ATGAATAGAA GTCAACATCT CCTTGAATAT GTTCTGGTTG TTGTGGCCTG 1861
 GACGAAACAT AGTGAATGTT ATGTTAGTGA AGTTAAAAA AAAAAAAAAA 1910

(6) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 5:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- (A) LENGTH: 23 base pairs
- (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
- (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
- (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ix) FEATURES:

- (A) NAME/KEY: modified_base
- (B) LOCATION: 3, 6, 21
- (D) OTHER INFORMATION: /note= "Note=A is Inosine"

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 5:

GCAGTAGART GGAAYTTYGC AMG

23

(7) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 6:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- (A) LENGTH: 20 base pairs
- (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
- (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
- (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ix) FEATURES:

- (A) NAME/KEY: modified_base
- (B) LOCATION: 9, 15, 18
- (D) OTHER INFORMATION: /note= "Note=A is Inosine"

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 6:

GCDATRTGAC CRAAAACACC

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Claims

1. A protein comprising an amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase-activity.
2. A gene encoding the protein as defined in claim 1.
3. The gene according to claim 2, which has a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2.
4. The gene according to claim 3, which has a nucleotide sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 3 or 4.
5. A plasmid comprising the gene as defined in claim 2.
6. An expression plasmid comprising:
 - (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell,

- (2) the gene as defined in claim 2 and
- (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably in the above described order.

- 5 7. A process for constructing an expression plasmid, which comprises combining:
 - (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell,
 - (2) the gene as defined in claim 2 and
 - (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably in the above described order.
- 10 8. A transformant comprising a host cell harboring the plasmid as defined in claim 5 or 6.
9. The transformant according to claim 8, wherein the host is a microorganism.
10. The transformant according to claim 8, wherein the host cell is a plant cell,
- 15 11. A process for enhancing iron absorbing ability of a host cell, which comprises introducing into a host cell an expression plasmid formed by combining (1) a promoter capable of functioning in a host cell, (2) a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene and (3) a terminator capable of functioning in a host cell, operably in the above described order and transforming said host cell.
- 20 12. The process according to claim 11, wherein the host cell is a plant cell,
13. The process according to claim 12, wherein the gene of the nicotianamine aminotransferase is the gene as defined in claim 2.
- 25 14. A gene fragment having a partial sequence of the gene as defined in claim 2, 3 or 4.
15. The gene fragment according to claim 14, wherein the number of the base is 15 or more and 50 or less.
- 30 16. The gene fragment according to claim 14, which has the nucleotide sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 5.
17. A process for detecting a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises detecting from plant gene fragments a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof by applying the hybridization method using the gene fragment as defined in claim 14, 15 or 16.
- 35 18. A process for amplifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises amplifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene having a nucleotide sequence encoding an amino acid sequence of an enzyme with the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity or a gene fragment thereof by applying PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on a plant gene fragment using the gene fragment as defined in claim 14, 15 or 16 as a primer.
- 40 19. A process for obtaining a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene, which comprises identifying a nicotianamine aminotransferase gene or a gene fragment thereof by the process as defined in claim 17 or 18, and isolating and purifying the identified gene or the gene fragment thereof.
- 45 20. A nicotianamine aminotransferase gene obtained by the process as defined in claim 19.

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(71) Applicant:
SUMITOMO CHEMICAL COMPANY LIMITED
Osaka-shi, Osaka 541 (JP)

(72) Inventors:
• **Mori, Satoshi**
Narashino-shi, Chiba (JP)

• **Nakanishi, Hiromi**
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo (JP)
• **Takahashi, Michiko**
Utsunomiya-shi, Tochigi (JP)

(74) Representative:
Winter, Brandl, Fürniss, Hübner, Röss,
Kaiser, Polte, Kindermann
Partnerschaft
Patent- und Rechtsanwaltskanzlei
Alois-Steinecker-Strasse 22
85354 Freising (DE)

(54) **Nicotianamine aminotransferase and gene therefor**

(57) A protein having an amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO: 1 or 2 or an amino acid sequence having said amino acid sequence with a single or plural amino acids deleted, replaced or added, and having the nicotianamine aminotransferase activity, a gene encoding said protein as well as utilization thereof for enhancement of ability of absorbing insoluble iron in soil and for improvement of resistance to iron deficiency are provided.



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 98 10 2891

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6)
X	S. MORI: "Reevaluation of the genes induced by iron deficiency in barley roots" SOIL SCI. PLANT NUTR., vol. 43, 1997, pages 975-980, XP002076369 *see the whole article*	1-20	C12N9/12 C12N15/63 C12N1/21 C12N5/10 C12N15/29
X	Plant nutrition for sustainable food production and environment. T. Ando eds. Kluwer Academic press. Doordrecht. 1997, p. 279-280. M. Takahashi et al. Purification, characterization and DNA sequencing of nicotianamine aminotransferase (NAAT-III) expressed in Fe- deficient barley roots. XP002076371 *see the whole article*	1-20	
A	K. KANAZAWA ET AL.: "Detection of two distinct isoenzymes of nicotianamine aminotransferase in Fe-deficient barley roots*see the whole article*" JOURNAL FOR EXPERIMENTAL BOTANY, vol. 46, no. 290, 1995, pages 1241-1244, XP002076370	1-20	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6) C12N
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 3 September 1998	Examiner Marie, A
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons</p> <p>& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			